# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 1 February 2001, at 10.35 a.m.

President: Mr. Christopher Westdal (Canada)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare the 864th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament open. At the outset, on behalf of the whole Conference, I warmly welcome the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov, who will be addressing the Conference shortly. I know I speak for all in appreciating this demonstration of the importance attached by the Minister and his Government to our forum and their continued commitment to the multilateral approach to disarmament.

As well, I extend a cordial welcome to Ambassador Horacio Emilio Solari, who has assumed responsibility as the Permanent Representative of Argentina. I look forward to working with him and you together in pursuing our common goals. Ambassador Solari will be the second speaker at this plenary meeting.

I also have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Bulgaria and the Republic of Korea.

As you are all aware, a tragic earthquake struck India's Gujarat state last week, taking a very heavy toll of pain, death, loss and damage. On this sad occasion, on behalf of the Conference, I express sympathy and sincere condolences to survivors and to the Government and the people of India, as well as to survivors and the Government and the people of neighbouring Pakistan, also hit hard by this earthquake.

It is now my honour to invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov, to address the Conference.

Mr. IVANOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Distinguished Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, the era of globalization is irrupting into our lives, forcing us to change our traditional ways and confronting us with increasingly complicated tasks. The international community will only be able to resolve these tasks if it acts jointly and rationally, using the achievements of contemporary science and technology and the world's combined economic and intellectual potential for the benefit of all the States of the globe.

No State, not even that which is most powerful in economic and military terms, can hope on its own to find responses to the new challenges that will threaten international security in the twenty-first century. All attempts to create isolated islands of well-being and stability in today's world are illusory and, in our view, doomed to failure.

This is strikingly demonstrated in the area of disarmament, where all the pros and cons of globalization are shown in clearest relief. For it is precisely the threat of a global nuclear confrontation which overturned our views about the foundations upon which every State should build its security and which paved the way to our laborious disarmament negotiations.

Since its very inception, a key role in this process has been played by multilateral diplomacy and, first and foremost, the United Nations. It is therefore quite legitimate that, even today, we are turning in our search for reliable and concerted responses to present-day challenges to time-tested institutions and mechanisms. In this respect, the Conference on Disarmament and

(Mr. Ivanov, Russian Federation)

the "Geneva process", in general, offer us uniquely valuable experience. It was in this Conference in Geneva that multilateral agreements prohibiting entire classes of weapons of mass destruction were elaborated. It was in Geneva that the most important bilateral agreements were struck, enabling Russia and the United States of America to initiate drastic reductions in strategic offensive arms.

We are strongly convinced that even today the potential of the Conference on Disarmament is far from exhausted. On the contrary, the era of globalization urgently calls for an integrated and multilateral approach to disarmament problems. This means that the search for their solution cannot and should not be the privilege of the narrow circle of nuclear Powers or of States possessing the largest military capabilities. In the contemporary world an arms race - wherever it might emerge - is bound to affect the interests of all States and to influence the general international environment.

Under such conditions the process of disarmament, like global security itself, is becoming global and indivisible in nature. This fact has yet again been graphically demonstrated by the outcome of the United Nations Millennium Summit and Assembly. For the disarmament process to develop in a normal manner, each State should be fully confident that its security is closely linked to that of the whole international community and is underpinned by political arrangements and international legal instruments. In other words, a necessary prerequisite for steady progress towards disarmament is the collective upholding of strategic stability in the world. Let me repeat that: the collective upholding of strategic stability in the world. And this should take place in the broadest sense of this notion, that is, in political, military, economic, humanitarian, environmental and other dimensions. In our view, this is the only way in which a secure and democratic model of the world order can be created that meets the requirements of the modern era.

In short, the very times in which we now live require us to revitalize the work of our Conference in order to conduct a thorough exploration of the military, political and disarmament aspects of strategic stability. The future of any forum and the effectiveness of any decisions it takes depend, however, on the will of its member States and their capacity to seek and find solutions.

The Russian Federation, for its part, is not only ready for this but is also taking definite steps aimed at strengthening global and regional security in all its aspects.

In 2000 the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, approved new versions of our country's blueprint for national security and for foreign policy, which emphasize that our country will strictly observe all its obligations under existing treaties and agreements in the area of arms limitation and reduction. We will continue to play an active part in the elaboration and conclusion of appropriate new agreements ensuring comprehensive strategic stability.

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In the first place, this concerns further measures to reduce the nuclear threat. Fully accepting its responsibility in this area, in the spring of the year 2000 Russia ratified the START-II treaty, which provides for a more than twofold reduction in Russian and American strategic arsenals.

Russia is ready to start negotiations with the United States of America immediately on the development of a START-III treaty. The Russian Federation proposes that the new agreement should provide even deeper reductions of strategic warheads than those already agreed, in other words, down to 1,500 units rather than 2,000-2,500.

But even this, as President Putin stated, is not the limit. We are ready subsequently to consider even lower levels. Agreement on such additional cuts would meet the aspirations of the peoples of the world. It would be in line with the decision of last year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Another actual example is the ratification by the Russian Federation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. We hope that the other States on which this treaty's entry into force depends will now follow suit, thus enabling this vital instrument to join those agreements that are already in force.

Such, then, is the extent of specific measures in the area of nuclear disarmament, measures which may be realistically - and I stress: realistically - implemented in the very near future and in that way can give powerful impetus to the whole disarmament process in the world and expand the scope of that process. This process should of course be pursued on the basis of the principle of equal security. It is vital that the other nuclear Powers be involved in it on a multilateral basis.

There is another fundamental issue at stake here. Such large-scale advances can only be achieved on condition that the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is maintained and strengthened. In our opinion, this treaty even now remains one of the pillars of today's architecture in the area of arms control and disarmament.

I do not believe that there is any need to reiterate the arguments of the Russian Federation in support of this instrument so vital to strategic stability. This approach, as shown by the outcome of the vote during recent sessions of the United Nations General Assembly on the resolution supporting the 1972 ABM Treaty, is shared by the great majority of the world's States.

We believe it essential that an active and meaningful dialogue on this topic be resumed with the new United States administration as soon as possible. In this respect, we proceed from the simple truth which was once stated by Seneca: "There are some remedies worse than the disease." As an alternative to a national missile defence system we propose a whole package of constructive, political and diplomatic measures. Their aim is to dispel existing concerns, held not only by the United States, about the so-called "new missile threats", while at the same time preserving the ABM Treaty. These steps include: the creation of a Moscow-based missile

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launch data exchange centre, established by Russia and the United States. Another would be the initiative on a global missile and missile technology non-proliferation control system. And finally, we favour the broad international cooperation open to all States in the area of theatre missile defence which was initiated through a number of arrangements reached by Moscow and Washington over the period 1997-2000.

Russia considers the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world and the non-deployment of nuclear weapons beyond national territories as a substantial contribution to strengthening strategic stability. In this connection, I would like to recall that all the nuclear weapons left outside Russia after the disintegration of the USSR have been brought back to Russian national territory. The cause of non-proliferation will only prevail if all nuclear weapons are concentrated on the territories of the States to which they belong.

Russia also proposes to develop and implement under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) an international project which will make it possible to exclude the use of the primary weapons-grade materials in the area of peaceful energy, namely, enriched uranium and pure plutonium.

I am deliberately giving such close attention to the issues of strengthening strategic stability, since the prospects of finding solutions to problems on the agenda of our Conference largely depend on these issues.

Mr. President, Russia is ready to work actively with you and with the other member States of the Conference in moving forward along the path of nuclear disarmament - in accordance with our own obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Our primary consideration in this respect is that our joint steps be realistic, balanced and definite. On this premise, we support the idea of establishing within the Conference on Disarmament a subsidiary body entrusted with an exploratory mandate for broad discussions on the problems relating to nuclear disarmament.

It is time now to re-establish in the Conference the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty, especially since its mandate was agreed upon in 1995.

If the international non-proliferation regime is to be strengthened, it is essential that the Conference continue work on the agreement on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

A matter of special concern to many States represented at the Conference is the current prospect of an arms race in outer space. That was why we, in company with the overwhelming majority of other States, at the last session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, supported the early start of substantive negotiations on the topic of outer space in our forum in Geneva.

(Mr. Ivanov, Russian Federation)

President Putin's proposal that an international conference on the prevention of an arms race in outer space be convened in the spring of 2001 in Moscow, under the auspices of the United Nations, is a move in the same direction. It is high time that a reliable international legal "safety net" be created in this area. The efforts and resources of our space agencies should be aimed at peaceful - including commercial - cooperation.

If through our joint efforts we can resolve these fundamental issues, we shall create favourable conditions for progress in other important disarmament areas as well, such as the strengthening of various non-proliferation and export control regimes, the prevention of the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons and movement towards the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines.

In conclusion, I should like to stress once more that the Russian Federation highly appreciates the role played by the Conference on Disarmament in building a new stable and safe world order and will continue its determined efforts to enhance the Conference's international authority and the effectiveness of its work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for his important and encouraging statement and, given that he must now depart, I request a brief suspension to enable me to escort the Minister from our chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: Our plenary now resumes, and it is my honour to give the floor, for the first time, to the new representative of Argentina, Ambassador Solari.

Mr. SOLARI (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President.

First of all allow me, on behalf of the Argentine delegation, to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this Conference at this important stage of its work. I wish you every success in your work and pledge the support and unlimited cooperation of my delegation in all your efforts to impart a new dynamism to our forum.

It is for me a special honour to take the floor for the first time in this multilateral forum for disarmament. I would also like to express my gratitude for the very warm words of welcome I received after assuming my functions as head of the Argentine delegation.

Sir, the Argentine Republic subscribes wholeheartedly to the objectives of the overwhelming majority of the international community in the area of nuclear non-proliferation, both those designed to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons and those which aim to place the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy within everyone's reach. With our own actions we are endeavouring to foster disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction because we believe that these genuinely endanger the survival of the entire planet.

(Mr. Solari, Argentina)

To this end a number of measures have been taken, including the accession of our country to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and the consensus reached in the NPT Review Conference. We should highlight the value of the work that is being carried out by the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, which is a forum of particular importance for establishing a verification regime to strengthen the Convention. We note too, with particular gratification that all South American countries have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, a significant step towards achieving its universality.

The commitment of Argentina to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is rooted in its conviction that a clear, coherent and resolute policy on this would help strengthen security in the world in general, and in various regions in particular, while at the same time it increases the possibilities of growth and development because it frees resources and potential for peaceful activities that can be used for the benefit of all.

With Brazil it was our clear understanding that this is what we should do. Accordingly, we have opened up our nuclear facilities for each other to inspect, through the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accountability and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), and, over the past few years, we have developed a common nuclear policy and together we have given assurances to the international community on the exclusively peaceful purposes of our respective nuclear programmes. This has created enormous scope for bilateral cooperation in this area.

We are concerned that there are countries which, instead of joining in the common endeavour for nuclear Powers to eliminate their stockpiles, have embarked instead on their own plans of acquiring and developing their own nuclear weapons. It is essential that we strive for a safer and better world where we can all prosper and develop. This is not merely a rhetorical flourish or an altruistic notion: this is a practical necessity for us all.

In many parts of the developing world, regional tensions are a constant spur for arms build-up that divert scant and desperately needed resources from development purposes. In our region we have been able to develop the notions of association, convergence and cooperation. This change has been made possible by the full force of representative democracy in Argentina and its neighbours, as well as the ongoing integration process in all those countries. In our region, we have created mechanisms to foster the criteria that I have outlined, we have managed to ban from the entire region all weapons of mass destruction and there has been significant progress in building confidence. The Declaration of MERCOSUR, adopted with Bolivia and Chile under which our area is designated as a zone of peace, is a significant step in this process. This instrument, adopted in Ushuaia in 1998, transforms the MERCOSUR region into a zone where the possibility of armed conflict has been removed. It also embodies the commitment of its members to non-proliferation, to the elimination of certain types of weapon and to the promotion of fundamental values and principles.

(Mr. Solari, Argentina)

We also have mechanisms for coordination and consultation on matters of defence and security with Brazil and Chile and our armed forces carry out joint military exercises with the armed forces of those countries and of Paraguay and Uruguay. Argentine vessels are repaired in Chile and Brazil.

The new security and defence that we are building in the southern cone is based on the defence of shared values. The objective is to protect us all from the scourge that threatens the fundamental values in which we believe and which we strive to uphold.

We live in a world in which dramatic changes are under way and increasing importance is given to the modalities for tackling security issues. In the future, world security will depend on a combination of regional and global initiatives and measures that have been carefully considered. In other words, the deadlock in the work of the Conference on Disarmament will ultimately affect the attainment of collective security and the development of our countries and peoples. The Conference has spent the last four years without carrying out any substantive work. These years have demonstrated the need for a concerted political and diplomatic effort, even more vigorous and all-inclusive than in the past, in order to reach an agreement that will enable the Conference to make headway in multilateral disarmament and weapons control.

The Conference remains the sole platform for global negotiation on disarmament. The Conference likewise is a place for dialogue and transparency. We must recognize, however, that the lack of a programme of work is not in any way attributable to any lack of commitment on the part of the President or delegations. Argentina considers that the adoption of a programme of work based on the proposals made by Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Lint and Ambassador Amorim would enjoy the support of the overwhelming majority of the member States and that this would be a sound working basis for the resumption of work by the Conference.

To that end, and to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament emerges from its stalemate and begins work on the substantive issues on its agenda, we should at least start work on the uncontroversial items, with a view to creating better conditions for seeking a mutual and generally acceptable agreement on the outstanding issues.

Argentina manifestly supports general complete nuclear disarmament. Our commitment to this goal is unequivocal. There are various practical steps for the attainment of this goal. These include the signature and necessary ratifications for the early entry into effect of the CTBT and the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, with a view to its conclusion over the next five years. The positive outcome of the latest NPT review conference and the United Nations resolution on the issue adopted by consensus in the First Committee, will give impetus to the negotiation of an FMCT. In this connection, we should take care to prevent a discussion on the precise mandate of the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament delaying negotiations on cut-off.

Under the Conference's agenda, my delegation would like to refer to the issue of outer space.

(Mr. Solari, Argentina)

Argentina considers that confidence-building measures are one of the cornerstones of stability and security in outer space. The associated problems undoubtedly constitute one of the major stumbling blocks and challenges facing the international community at the beginning of this new century and millennium. Our delegation is ready to support any proposal for the establishment of a subsidiary body or mechanism entrusted with preventing an arms race in outer space and with a mandate conducive to the attainment of consensus in the Conference.

Another of our priorities is that the Conference on Disarmament contribute to transparency in the field of armaments.

Argentina has played an active role in fostering confidence-building measures in general and in particular with regard to conventional weapons. In August 1993, Argentina submitted a proposal to the ad hoc committee on the creation of an international register of compliance with agreements on weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons and chemical and biological weapons.

In the context of the Organization of American States (OAS), Argentina participated in the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition, supported by 19 countries at the nineteenth General Assembly of OAS, held in Guatemala in June 1999. This instrument constitutes an excellent confidence-building measure, since its purpose is to bring about greater transparency, predictability and regional stability.

Argentina firmly believes that greater transparency in the domain of weapons, the greater transparency sought by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, would increase confidence, enhance stability and help States exercise restraint in their policies, and, all in all, would be conducive to the strengthening of peace. At the same time, Argentina upholds the need for common and effective criteria for the monitoring of international transfers of weapons, and the need for control measures to be adopted and respected by the greatest possible number of States.

In this connection, it would be apposite to recall the task entrusted to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), to prepare a comparative study on the defence expenditures of Argentina and its sister Republic of Chile. The objective of this undertaking is to study and propose a common standardized methodology for the calculation of the defence expenditures of both countries, in order to prepare the way for a proposed methodology applicable to the entire region. This work is of great importance in promoting transparency and mutual trust among countries and we hope that the final document will be ready by the end of March 2001.

The current situation calls for the resumption in the Conference on Disarmament of the debate on transparency, to prepare the ground for the drafting of future international instruments that will impose restraint and responsibility on both producers and end-users.

With regard to the issue of small weapons, the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons and, in particular, of small arms and light weapons has been a cause of concern over a

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number of years, in view of their serious negative impact on human safety and sustainable development. Argentina has a national computerized data system for firearms and in 1993 a new exercise was conducted to register all weapons that existed in the country. In 1994, it became obligatory for any bearer of arms to have a so-called "legitimate user's certificate" and a database was established. For Argentina, the problem of small weapons has three main aspects: the first is a purely humanitarian concern for the number of victims that these cause, and about the easy access to and use of such arms by adolescents and children. The second aspect is economic, relating to the resources that are squandered on the purchase of these weapons, instead of being used for development. The third dimension is that of security, because of the regional and global repercussions.

To curb this trend, we need better international control of the production, stockpiling and spread of these weapons. We therefore support the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in July 2001, with the aim of promoting a sense of responsibility among States for the export, import and transit of these weapons. We also hope that work will soon be concluded on the protocol on firearms to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which will create a centralized international register on the production and illicit traffic in firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials.

With the various efforts under way in this area, our continent has taken the lead role in international action to combat the accumulation of small weapons, munitions and explosives, and it might therefore be worthwhile for the Conference to analyse the measures that have already been adopted regionally.

The problem of anti-personnel landmines is far from being resolved, but at least the international community has become aware of the issue and has taken certain substantive steps - notably, the Ottawa Convention - to further humanitarian demining and the prohibition of these weapons.

With the Ottawa Convention the international community has gained an instrument of great importance. The Argentine Republic deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention in 1999. Argentina decided to align itself with those countries that have been working so hard in pursuit of this objective and to join the collaborative effort for mine-clearing and assistance to victims, because these are fundamental and complementary aspects of the problem. To this end, Argentina has now set up a centre for training in humanitarian mine-clearing.

With regard now to procedures in the Conference and, in particular, certain aspects of its organization and functioning, the Argentine delegation would not oppose the establishment of any operational modalities which, without changing the context and the framework established by the rules of procedure of the Conference, would enable it to carry out its work and to create a propitious climate for future negotiations. In this connection, we note the importance attached by all members of the Conference to stepping up the President's informal consultations, so as to facilitate progress in our work.

(Mr. Solari, Argentina)

It should not be thought, however, that merely by spending time looking at the Conference's working procedures, we can pull the Conference out of its current deadlock. The decisive factor in all this is, of course, the political will of States. If this is lacking, or if it is weak, the Conference's paralysis will continue. No change in the rules can replace the collective will to hold dialogue, to negotiate and to bring about a solution.

For our own part, we are resolved to do everything within our reach to maintain what we have already achieved and we trust that the further strengthening of the non-proliferation regime will also help further nuclear disarmament. We are also determined to make the Conference on Disarmament an effective instrument designed to achieve actual results.

In short, Mr. President, it is essential that the Conference begin to discharge its mandate, namely, to bring about a safer and better world and, therefore, one that is less insecure; in this way essential resources will be released for the development and prosperity of peoples, resources which would otherwise have been squandered on these weapons of mass destruction. This is the aim and the aspiration of the Argentine delegation. We know that the mission is not easy, but for that it is no less essential.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador Solari, for your auspicious maiden address to the Conference and your kind words for the Chair, and I reiterate our welcome to you. I give the floor now to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Ian Soutar. You have the floor.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, may I, at the outset, say what a pleasure it is to see you presiding over the conduct of our affairs. Apart from the very strong links which exist between our two Governments and countries as members of the Commonwealth, I have good reason to appreciate the experience you personally bring to the presidency of our Conference. May I also take this opportunity of welcoming our new colleague, the Ambassador of Argentina, to our midst.

Mr. President, I have asked for the floor to set out the United Kingdom's expectations for the 2001 session of the Conference on Disarmament. My Government believes that it is important that we take advantage of this general debate to highlight the priorities on our agenda before we get down to substantive work. I hope that other delegations will do likewise so that in your continuing consultations on our work programme you may be guided by the views of the membership of the Conference.

Before addressing the prospects for 2001, I should like, briefly, to review developments during the year 2000. My Government believes that it is essential not to lose sight of the real progress which was made on the arms control and disarmament agenda during 2000.

In May, 158 States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, meeting at the Sixth Review Conference of that Treaty, adopted, by consensus, a final document. And yet, only a few weeks before the Conference began, a number of Cassandras were predicting the failure of the Conference and, with it, the demise of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. As I look around

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this chamber, I recognize a number of delegates who made a significant contribution to the positive outcome of the Conference, as you did yourself, Mr. President. I should like to commend them, and their Governments, for not having despaired of the cause.

Throughout the year, here in Geneva, 52 States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972 continued to refine the text of a protocol to ensure compliance with the Convention. As a friend of the chair of the Ad Hoc Group, I can testify from personal experience to the intensification of work within the Group which occurred during the latter part of the year. By year end, the General Assembly had adopted, by consensus, a resolution calling for the convening of the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention in December 2001. The United Kingdom believes that the negotiations on the Protocol can, and should, be completed before that deadline.

The year 2000 also saw preparations get under way for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, with the first preparatory meeting taking place in March, and the confirmation, in a resolution by the General Assembly, that the Conference would take place in New York in July this year, and only the week before last, the second meeting of the preparatory committee saw further progress, with delegations intensifying their consultations on a programme of action, to be adopted by the Conference itself, aimed at resolving the problems caused by the worldwide accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Finally, no survey of the year 2000 could overlook the convening of the Millennium General Assembly in September last year, and its declaration, which highlighted the need to work for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, nor the subsequent adoption by the Security Council of a declaration which stressed the critical importance of disarmament.

It was against this background of solid achievement that the Secretary-General, in his message to the Conference at the outset of its 2001 session, drew attention to the continuing failure of the Conference on Disarmament to reach consensus, get down to substantive work and live up to its potential. The evident failure of the Conference to agree on a work programme, and the perception of stagnation which accompanied that failure, should not, however, obscure the fact that in the course of 2000 the Conference did make significant progress towards the adoption of a work programme. The formal output from the Conference's deliberations - our annual report to the General Assembly - does not tell the whole story. The report's slimness, a mere 38 paragraphs, weighing in at a scant 16 pages, should not be allowed to belie the efforts of succeeding presidencies to narrow the gaps among delegations regarding the content of that work programme, and the priorities to be attached to individual items within that programme.

Those efforts were to culminate in the proposals for a work programme, contained in CD/1620, which we have come to refer to as the Amorim proposals, not just as shorthand, but because of the very real respect in which we hold their author. Subsequent presidencies, first Bulgaria and now Canada, have continued efforts further to narrow the gaps between positions. As a result, I believe that the Conference on Disarmament is now poised to get down to substantive work, thereby re-asserting its traditional role.

(Mr. Soutar, United Kingdom)

Of the items on our agenda, it is no secret that the priority for my Government remains the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Such a treaty will put a worldwide verifiable and legally-binding end to fissile material production for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. It is an essential step contributing to nuclear disarmament. Before there can be an effective verifiable ban on all nuclear weapons, there has to be confidence that no new fissile material for nuclear weapons can be produced. The international community reaffirmed the importance of this step several times last year - in the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference, and in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Both these forums called on the Conference on Disarmament to make an immediate start to FMCT negotiations.

The United Kingdom does not believe that there can be progress on nuclear disarmament without progress on an FMCT. But we do recognize that, for some delegations, nuclear disarmament, seen as a whole, remains the highest priority. Let me make it clear, once again, that my delegation is ready to enter into substantive discussions on this topic. Members of the Conference will recall that the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference not only contained an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, but also called for further work on specific measures, including on verification. This is a topic which might be addressed by the ad hoc committee in the Amorim proposals. The United Kingdom delegation would certainly be willing to bring forward further ideas on this subject.

For other delegations, the question of the prevention of an arms race in space is a very high priority. My delegation does not believe that this topic is, in present circumstances, ripe for negotiation. But here too we are ready to enter into a discussion on this topic. I would urge those delegations for which this is a subject of concern - but which have so far been reluctant to agree to a work programme that does not specifically allow for negotiation - to reflect on the opportunity which they may be missing of having a wide-ranging discussion on this topic within the Conference.

Mr. President, I see no need at this stage to restate the United Kingdom position on other agenda items. These are well known, and I hope that, if the work programme is adopted, I may have an opportunity of setting out our position on individual items in greater detail. But what I do want to do today, Mr. President, is to assure you, and the Conference, that the United Kingdom is ready to accept a work programme based on the Amorim proposals. I hope very much, as I said at the outset of my remarks, that other delegations will be prepared to come forward with similar statements of intent, with the aim of allowing you to intensify and complete your present round of consultations.

Mr. President, the United Kingdom delegation is ready to roll up its sleeves and get down to work. I should like to call on other delegations to join us in doing so.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador for that encouraging statement and for your kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, Ambassador Petko Draganov. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. DRAGANOV (Bulgaria): Mr. President, at the outset, please allow me to extend my warmest congratulations and to express personal gratification on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its 2001 session. I would like to use this opportunity to commend the energy, creativity and imagination that you have been showing in the still ongoing consultations, some of which I was privileged and pleased to share with you. I would like to express my gratitude for the cooperation and goodwill I have enjoyed during this period. It is well known that the early stage of the Conference's annual session is particularly difficult, and this may be especially true this year. I am fully confident, however, that under your wise guidance and buoyant determination, the Conference on Disarmament has as good a chance as any to overcome its present deadlock and meet the responsibilities entrusted to it by the international community, as the sole forum for negotiating international arms control and disarmament treaties. At this important juncture, let me assure you, Mr. President, that in carrying out your term of service you can count on my delegation's continued cooperation and support.

Let me use this occasion to say a warm word of welcome to the new colleagues who have arrived to work with us in the Conference from Argentina, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Ukraine and wish them every success, as well as to bid farewell to the outgoing distinguished ambassadors of Bangladesh, Iraq, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. My best wishes for good health and success go to them and their families. I would also like to extend my greetings to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky. A special word of welcome goes to our new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Enrique Roman-Morey, to whom we also pledge support and cooperation.

Mr. President, I am pleased to make my short intervention today under the presidency of the representative of a country which has proved in practice that the achievement of a mine-free world is among its highest priorities. Let me start by reiterating Bulgaria's firm support for all efforts, including in the framework of this forum, aimed at achieving a total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. Let me express our satisfaction with the fact that, by the end of the year 2000, 107 countries had ratified the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction and 57 countries had notified their consent to be bound by the Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are ready to support all proposals aimed at the universalization of these international instruments.

As I have already been able to inform the Conference on previous occasions, in accordance with its consistent policy of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, in 1998 the Republic of Bulgaria ratified the Ottawa Convention, as well as the Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

(Mr. Draganov, Bulgaria)

Since signing the Ottawa Convention, Bulgaria has acted with vigour to meet its commitments. Thus, in 1999 the Bulgarian Government adopted a national programme for the implementation of the Ottawa Convention. It comprises all aspects of the clearing of minefields and the destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. The necessary national machinery, namely an interagency working group under the chairmanship of a deputy minister of defence, was established to coordinate and control the implementation of the programme.

By 31 October 1999 all 68 minefields on the territory of Bulgaria had been cleared and 13,926 antipersonnel mines of the type PSM-1 had been destroyed on the spot. A total of 13,364 acres were made mine-free.

Today, it is my pleasure to announce that, by 20 December 2000, i.e. two years in advance of the deadline under article 4 of the Ottawa Convention, a total of 881,970 anti-personnel mines had been destroyed and the Republic of Bulgaria effectively became a 100 per cent mine-free country. In accordance with article 3 of the Convention, 4,000 anti-personnel mines have been retained for the purpose of training in mine detection, mine clearance and mine destruction techniques.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador Draganov, for that positive statement and for your very kind words.

Distinguished delegates, as you are aware, our esteemed colleague and friend, Ambassador Man-Soon Chang of the Republic of Korea, will be leaving the Conference shortly. I know that my own admiration for the grace, the authority and the tact with which he represented his country and contributed to our common endeavour during his assignment here is widely shared. I am sure I speak for all of us when I offer Ambassador Chang and his family our very best wishes for continued success and for personal happiness. Ambassador Chang, you have the floor.

Mr. CHANG (Republic of Korea): I thank you very much for your kind words to me.

Mr. President, since this is the first and probably the last, time I take the floor under your presidency, may I warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and assure you of my delegation's full support in your untiring endeavour.

All of us present here are keenly aware that kicking the Conference off to a good start during the first presidency of the year 2001, particularly at this critical juncture, is a most daunting and challenging task. It is no coincidence that this heavy responsibility has been conferred upon Canada and, in particular, a seasoned diplomat of your calibre, who has always demonstrated invaluable leadership and creativeness in many important areas of arms control and disarmament.

(Mr. Chang, Republic of Korea)

I have asked for the floor today to bid farewell to my colleagues here in this prestigious chamber, rather than to make a national statement on specific disarmament issues. I cannot, however, pass up this farewell occasion without sharing with you some of my thoughts on the current situation in the Conference on Disarmament.

My country became a member State of this august body in 1996 when CTBT negotiations were virtually completed. As a new member State, we had high hopes and great expectations for the proliferation of activities in the Conference, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, to advance the global cause of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. Notwithstanding some work during a brief spell in early 1998, which coincided with my arrival in Geneva, developments at the Conference on Disarmament have fallen far short of our expectations, to say the least. What I have witnessed is not the proliferation, but the non-proliferation, of activities. This negotiating forum has been in the doldrums, helpless in the face of the forces of realpolitik. We have had many wake-up calls, yet the Conference has remained dormant. I was also dormant in this respect, without feeling many qualms, as I was able to devote more time and energy to other responsibilities.

If the Conference's inertia implies a world so safe and peaceful as not to be a cause for concern, then we could be excused for this sorry state of affairs. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case. Rather, there is a long list of agenda items which should be taken up without further delay, particularly in the wake of last year's successful NPT Review Conference. Outside the Conference on Disarmament, we now hear the increasing concern that this body could be marginalized or fall into oblivion, unless we regain momentum as soon as possible. I do not intend to be a doomsayer or to indulge in any irresponsible cynicism. Quite to the contrary, I stress the value and efficacy of the multilateral track in disarmament, however arduous and painstaking a process it may be.

In this regard, Mr. President, I take this opportunity to admire all the efforts made not only by yourself, but also by your predecessors, to break the impasse involving the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament and to move the process forward, which culminated in CD/1624. At this juncture, I fully share the judgement you made in your opening statement at the plenary of 23 January that CD/1624 - or something very close to it - remains the best option available.

As we all know what we lack now is not the wisdom to improve on the language of the work programme, but the political will to move forward even in the face of the evolving security environment, which we admit is complex and fluid. In difficult times, we are tempted to take up entrenched positions. Once we do that, however, we head straight for a vicious circle, without knowing how to break out of it. The Conference on Disarmament is now at a crossroads, and the direction that we should take is clear. It is the path of the win-win situation, where pragmatism and realism prevail over dogmatism and extremism, and where flexibility is not regarded as defeat or loss of face. Coming from a region where the cold war legacy has only just begun to wane, we have a keen interest in progress in the Conference on Disarmament, which certainly has significant implications for our part of the world.

(Mr. Chang, Republic of Korea)

Mr. President, the time has now come for me to move on, and so I bid farewell to all my colleagues remaining behind to struggle for substantive work to begin in the Conference. With your determination and strength, I believe you will persist in your patient efforts to bring all the players on board so that you can ride the wind and cross the raging sea, as you so eloquently pleaded. Last but not least, I would like to thank our Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the new Deputy Secretary-General, Ambassador Enrique Roman-Morey, and the secretariat, who have served the Conference so well with limited resources.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador, for your statement and for your generous references to my work. We truly wish you and yours all the very best. The next speaker on my list, and the last speaker before I record a report on my consultations, is Ambassador Béliz of Panama.

Mr. BELIZ (Panama) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, may I first, on behalf of President Moscoso and his Government, thank you and the other members of the Conference on Disarmament for the invitation extended to us to participate as observers in this important body.

My country attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament, to its work and to the issues which it tackles. The work that you are carrying out to foster global disarmament as a path to peace among all nations is of great interest for us. Being one of the few countries in the world that has no army, as stipulated in article 305 of the Political Constitution, Panama firmly believes in disarmament.

Panama is a pre-eminently peaceful country because of the nature of its people and its geographical role as a trade route for the entire world. It is a signatory to almost all the conventions under the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations which promote peace, the comprehensive economic development of humankind, the renunciation of all types of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction and disarmament in general.

Thus, Panama is pleased to have signed the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We believe that any weapon of mass destruction is a flagrant violation of the right to the peaceful coexistence of all peoples and a threat to regional and world peace. Accordingly, Panama believes that collective efforts should be made to address these challenges and to achieve cooperation in a climate of peace and democracy in the world.

Finally, Sir, we wish you and all members of the Conference a year of fruitful work and great success.

Mr. SEETHARAM (India): I have requested the floor, Mr. President, to express the profound and sincere appreciation of my delegation for the words of sympathy and condolence expressed by you on behalf of this Conference regarding the disastrous earthquake in India. The Government and the people of India are making all efforts to deal with what is perhaps the

(Mr. Seetharam, India)

greatest natural calamity in the history of our country and one that has left so much death and destruction in its wake. I would also like to express our thanks for the spontaneous, generous and timely assistance on the part of the international community that has helped India in dealing with this extremely tragic event.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for that statement. I want now, unless there are other speakers, to record a report on my own consultations to date, and I address three questions: first, how might the search for a consensus work programme be advanced? The second, to what worthwhile use might the Conference be put while that search continues? And third, what, then, lies ahead?

On tough, shifting terrain, with key fundamentals of future global security at stake, above all, the course of future nuclear attitudes, postures and arsenals, we are here seeking text for a Conference on Disarmament work programme with every word of which every one of the 66 diverse States here is prepared to live - every word, every State. Consensus in this Conference is powerful and valuable, our goal highly ambitious.

CD/1624, the Amorim programme, is good but it is not good enough. We are close, but in a quest for consensus, a miss is as good as a mile - and, let us face facts, we are still missing.

As President, as mandated and in the tradition of my predecessors, I am naturally compelled to explore change in the work programme or the accompanying presidential statement which might find consensus support. To this end, I have informally assessed the textual gaps to be closed and I have taken quite thorough pains to clarify a broad range of national positions and gain insight and counsel from colleagues, exploring the potential for further progress, for at least some further productive refinement of CD/1624 as a continuing basis for further work, if not quite yet full consensus.

Meanwhile, though, a few hard facts intrude. First, success depends critically on the will of the parties. In this exercise, like my predecessors, I can change more words than wills. We have brought water to the horses and horses to the water. The drinking is up to them.

Second, for key players, currently engaged in germane policy reviews, and for others, naturally concurrently engaged, multilateral arms control and disarmament talks and negotiations, including the work programme of our Conference, must be assessed in broader security equations. Our work always derives from that overarching concept and context of security analysis and action. Despite our best efforts, causation in this relationship is not much at all the other way around.

I will keep you posted.

On the second question of the worthwhile work that the Conference might do while that search continues, it should come as no surprise, after all we have been through, that without an agreed programme of work, the Conference can do little real work.

(The President)

It is generally agreed, for example, that thrashing about - meeting and talking for the sake of meeting and talking, say - would gain this house little credit. It could indeed be counterproductive, particularly if it served to emphasize and deepen differences, as would, almost certainly, rehearsals of well-known national postures on CD/1624.

In one important dimension, of course, despite the absence of an agreed work programme, the Conference can be fully used. Its platform can be used by parties to inform and to influence. This forum provides means of engagement which, well used, have some power to shape perceptions and policy analyses.

So far this year, though, many States are hesitating, reticent. For one thing, they are little inclined simply to rehearse what they have said before about our enduring impasse (not least lest they harm prospects for its resolution). But more, I sense, delegations do not want to resort to make-work here. They do not want to pretend here. There is too much at stake for make-believe.

Beyond valuable formal plenaries like today's, though, our prospects for useful work thin fast. Last week's developments were highly instructive about the real potential of many suggestions made over the years that we might seek substantive progress in informal discussions. The proposal that this week's first plenary be replaced by an informal meeting was immediately resisted by parties variously unwilling to launch discussions without concurrent negotiations or unwilling to agree to informal consultations without an agenda - and the quest for an agenda, of course, would bring the circle right back to where we are and have been for years, seeking consensus on content and balance in our work. In sum, I see few if any useful informal consultations on our immediate horizon.

What, then, lies ahead? There will come a time, make no mistake, when we will either approve a programme based on CD/1624 and get on with the ton of work in it - or, with natural reluctance, given all the time and effort we have invested in the attempt, abandon that draft and start the search again for consensus on the content, allocation and schedule of our work, whether discussion, exploration or negotiation.

Impatient angst notwithstanding, that decision is not yet ripe, that time not yet come. It is true that delegations are not all yet ready to accept CD/1624 - but nor are they at all yet ready to abandon it as, at least, "a basis for further intensive consultations".

In these impacted circumstances, I will carry the search for consensus forward, despite the awkward timing, on the simple grounds that CD/1624 is not yet good enough. Our fundamental Conference responsibility, to create and sustain a credible multilateral option for States seeking security here, has not yet therefore been fulfilled. Whenever States find themselves ready to dispose of CD/1624 in one way or another, we need to ensure that it really is our best shot and as national statements have made plain and my consultations have confirmed, that shot still needs work. I will do it, as much as I can.

(The President)

At this stage, I am considering CD/1624 as the basis for a Conference session devoted to a timely, valuable exploration of multilateral alternatives to further resort to arms.

As the search for work-programme consensus continues, we will have formal plenaries as required - without fretting and fussing about our fate too much or too noisily. But that said, I reiterate my hope that national statements might worthily fill our early plenaries, as they have today's.

As well, we should go on trying hard to conceive work, worthwhile work that we might get done, despite our inability - which we know may well persist for some time - to bring the long discussion of CD/1624 to a conclusion.

Meanwhile, of course, all delegations are at all times free and welcome to bring their best ideas for solutions forward. That use, to serve its members as a platform and forum, this Conference will always have.

The timing, I repeat, is awkward for me, for my successors, for all of us. Indeed, for all parties making suggestions about the way forward, I have noticed, timing is a vexed question. For example, the German suggestion that we accepted last week makes obvious good sense that, without work-programme agreement, we should get back to basics, back to agenda consultations. Where else would there be to start anew, after all, but with the agenda?

But when would we take that step? In Germany's view, this should not be for the time being, so as to allow my consultations to continue, but perhaps after my presidency. The problem is, though, that parties will then still be waiting and seeing. Indeed, circumstances may well not be ripe for final decision on a fully-fledged long-term work programme for several entire presidencies to come.

As to other suggestions for worthwhile work, both timing and content are inherently problematic. Any proposal for substantive work - whether for informal consultations, for expert study groups or for the appointment of special coordinators to elaborate mandates, as examples - must contend with our lack of an effective agenda. In each case, consensus would be precluded by precisely the same differences between parties about priorities, emphases and balance that continue to impede agreement on a programme of work. There is no getting around this problem. It has to be solved.

I seek your sustained understanding and support as I work on to try to clear a path through these various densities to refreshed purpose and to good work as soon as possible for this valuable institution.

I should now like to invite you to take a decision on the request of Uruguay to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during this session, without having first considered it in an informal plenary session. This request is contained in document CD/WP.516, which is before you.

'(The President)

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Uruguay to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure? I see no objections.

It is so decided.

Unless there are other delegations who wish to take the floor now, this concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 8 February 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.